3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FRS Ngoni FRS

houses' among the maize stalks, tying the stalks together to make conical shelters. There they played house, pretending to cook and pound. But the enthusiasm for these playhouses was shortlived, and on the whole the children and their nurse girls preferred to be in the village where they could see and hear what was going on. The older boys in this age-group seldom went to the playground, and pursued their games in the open spaces of the village. 857

The small girls had 'dolls' which they treated as little babies. Sometimes it was a maize cob tucked into a bit of cloth and carried on their backs. More realistic dolls were made of a bundle of reeds tied together with the hard round shell of a fruit fitted on top and painted with eyes, nose and mouth. Older girls made these dolls for the little ones, and showed them how to feed the doll from a tiny gourd and taught them lullabies to sing while they jogged the dolls on their back or nursed them on their lap. 524

Little boys had a wider range of toys, made for them by older brothers and quickly copied by the children themselves. They made windmills from maize sheaths which twisted on a stick as they ran. They had hoops of bamboo peelings, trundled with a notched stick, and a small round solid wooden wheel with a hole in it which they pushed with a long-handled crook. They had tops of wood and whipped them with lengths of bark rope. They were for ever collecting scraps of iron from wherever men were working. These they sharpened on stones, and used as knives, or bound them to a haft, as a little axe, with fragments of skin which they scrounged when a shield was being cut, or an ox flayed. The small boys were the tinkers of the village, collecting whatever scrap they thought they could use, and hiding it each in his own safe and secret place, and fighting savagely if anyone robbed a secret store. Many boys spent hours making clay figures, men, cattle, monkeys, dogs, and there were certain conventions which allowed little variety governing their style and shape. Sometimes they drew, or 'wrote' as they 857 857 532

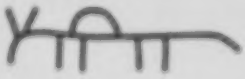
857 mid, in the sand move conventional figures of men and
592 animals which are reproduced here. Their ingenuity in the use of local materials was boundless, and led later to remarkably accurate scale models of lorries and aeroplanes made from pith, bamboo and thorns.

A man

A wild pig

A baboon

A dog



A cow

857 Most of the games such as tops and hoops were seasonal. They appeared suddenly in the village, lasted for a few weeks and then ceased as abruptly as they had begun. A perennial amusement among Ngoni boys of five to seven was playing at law courts. They sat round in traditional style with a 'chief' and his elders facing the court, the plaintiffs and defendants presenting their case, and the counsellors conducting proceedings and cross-examining witnesses. In their high squeaky voices the little boys imitated their fathers whom they had seen in the courts, and they gave judgements, imposing heavy penalties, and keeping order in the court with ferocious severity. Another game which the boys of five to seven enjoyed was a form of tug-of-war, two gangs pulling on a bark rope, until one gave way, with shouting, whistling and a final cry: 'The strong ones. They prevail.'

000 In the dry season which was the dancing season children